# Sheldon Mayor.

Curia ſpecialis tent' die Lunæ, 31 die *Januarii*, 1675. Annoq; Regni Regis CAROLI Secundi, *Angliæ*, &c. xxviii.

THis COURT doth deſire Mr. Sharpe to Print his Sermon Preached yeſterday morning before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen at Bow-Church, with what he had further prepared to deliver at that time.

Wagſtaffe.

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Imprimatur,

Geo. Hooper, *Rev. Dⁿ. Archiep. Cant. à Sac. Domeſt.*

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A

# SERMON

Preached before the

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

# Lord Mayor,

AND

ALDERMEN of LONDON,

AT

*BOW*-CHURCH.

---

By *JOHN SHARPE*, Chaplain to the Right Honourable *Heneage* Lord *Finch*, Lord High Chancellor of *ENGLAND*.

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*LONDON*:
Printed by *Andrew Clark*, for *Walter Kettilby*, at the Bishops Head in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, 1676.

## 1 Tim. iv. 8.

*Godlineſs is profitable unto all things, having a promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

These words are the enforcement of an exhortation which St. *Paul* had made to *Timothy* in the Verſe before going, which was that he ſhould *Avoid prophane and Old-wives Fables*; meaning thoſe Impious and ſuperſtitious *Doctrines*, and the carnal and unchriſtian *Obſervances* that were grounded upon them (ſome of which he had mentioned in the beginning of this Chapter) which ſome at that time did endeavour to introduce into *Chriſtianity*: and inſtead of applying his mind to theſe, that he ſhould rather *Exerciſe himſelf unto* true *Godlineſs*.

This was the Exhortation. The Arguments wherewith he enforceth it are Two: Firſt, The Unprofitableneſs of theſe Carnal and Superſti-

rious *Doctrines* and *Practices*. *Bodily exercise* (saith he) *profiteth little*. Secondly, The real usefulness of solid Vertue and Godliness to all the Purposes of life. *Godliness is profitable to all things, having a promise of this Life as well as of that which is to come.*

I shall not here meddle at all with the former part of the Apostles *Exhortation* or the *Argument* that hath relation to it; but shall apply my self wholly to the latter, craving leave most plainly and affectionately to press upon you the *Exercise* of *Godliness* upon those Grounds and Considerations on which the Apostle here recommendeth it.

Indeed to a man that considers well, it will appear the most unaccountable thing in the world, that among all those several *Exercises* that Mankind busie themselves about, this of *Godliness* should be in so great a measure neglected, that men should be so diligent, so industrious, so unwearied, some in getting *Estates*, others in Purveying for *Pleasures*, others in learning *Arts* and *Trades*; All in some thing or other relating to this *sensible* World; and so few should study to acquaint themselves with *God*, and the Concernments of their souls, to learn the *Arts* of Vertue and Religious Conversation.

Cer-

Certain it is, this *Piece* of *Skill* is not more above our reach than many of those other things we so industriously pursue; nay, I am apt to think it is more within our power than most of them. For in our other Labours we cannot always promise to our selves certain success. A thousand things may intervene which we know not of, that may defeat all our plots and designs though never so carefully laid; but no man ever seriously undertook the Business of Religion but he accomplished it.

Nay further, As we can with greater certainty, so can we with less pains and difficulty promise to our selves success in this affair, than we can hope to compass most of our worldly designs which so much take up our thoughts. I doubt not in the least but that less labour, less trouble, less solicitude will serve to make a man a good *Christian*, than to get an *Estate*, or to attain a competent skill in Humane Arts and Sciences.

And then for other Motives to oblige us to the study of *Religion*, we have incomparably more and greater than we can have for the pursuit of any other thing. It is certainly the greatest Concernment we have in the world. It is the very thing God sent us into the world about. It is the very thing that his Son came down

from Heaven to inſtruct us in. It is the very thing by which we ſhall be concluded everlaſtingly happy, or everlaſtingly miſerable after this life is ended.

Theſe things well conſidered, we may juſtly (I ſay) ſtand amazed, that men ſhould be ſo prodigiouſly ſupine and negligent in an Affair of this nature and importance, as we ſee they generally are.

If there can any account be given of this matter, I ſuppoſe it muſt be ſome ſuch as this, That the *things* of this *World*, upon which we beſtow our Care, our Time, our Courtſhip, are preſent to us. We ſee them every day before our eyes; we taſte, we feel the ſweetneſs of them; we are ſenſible that their enjoyment is abſolutely neceſſary to our preſent well-being: But as for ſpiritual matters they lie under a great diſadvantage. They appear to us as at a great diſtance. We do not apprehend any preſent need we have of them: Nor do we fancy any ſweetneſs or reliſh in them. Nay, on the contrary, we form the moſt frightful and diſmal *Images* of them that can be. We look upon them not only as *flat*, and *unſavoury*; but as things which if we trouble our heads too much about will certainly ruine all our deſigns in this World.

World. We think *Religion* good for nothing but to ſpoil good Company; to make us melancholy and mopiſh; to diſtract us in our Buſineſs and Employments; and to put ſo many Reſtraints upon us that we can neither with that freedom nor ſucceſs purſue our Temporal Concernments, which we think neceſſary to our happineſs in this World.

But let us ſuppoſe things to be thus with Religion as we have fancied, yet cannot this be any reaſonable Excuſe for our careleſneſs about it. What though there were no viſible Benefit by a religious life in this world? What though the rewards of our pains about it were only in reverſion? Yet ſince a time will come when it will be our greateſt Intereſt to have been heartily Religious, is it not a madneſs now to neglect it? What though *Religion* be a courſe of life difficult and unpleaſant; a way ſtrewed with Briers and Thorns; a way which if we follow, we are certainly loſt, as to our hopes of any thing here? Yet ſince a Time will certainly come when we ſhall wiſh, that we had been *good Chriſtians*, though we had loſt our *right eyes* and our *right hands* upon the condition; when we ſhall wiſh that we had purchaſed Virtue though at the rate of the loſs of the whole

World: For Gods ſake why ſhould we not be of the ſame mind now? Who but Fools and Children but will look upon that which ſhall certainly and unavoidably be, with the ſame regard as if it was now preſent?

But indeed, this is not the Caſe of Religion; This Buſineſs of Piety is not ſo formidable as we often repreſent it. It is no ſuch Enemy to our Temporal deſigns. It is a very innocent thing, and will do us no harm; though we look no further than this preſent World. It will hinder none of our delights or pleaſures, but will allow us to gratifie every *Appetite* that God and Nature hath put into us. And if any man doubt this, let him name that Natural deſire, which the Chriſtian Religion doth forbid or any way hinder the innocent ſatisfaction of: I am confident he ſhall be able to name none. Since this is the Caſe then, how much more *Childiſh* than *Children* ſhall we appear if we make ſo little reckoning of it? How inexcuſably Fooliſh ſhall we be, if we will not be at ſome pains to poſſeſs our ſelves of that which will be no manner of Hinderance to us in our affairs in this World, and will infallibly make us everlaſtingly happy in that which is to come?

But

But further; What if it be certain, that a Life of ſtrict virtue is not only no Hinderance to our Temporal deſigns, but a great furtherance of them? What if it can be Proved, that beſides the influence it has on our Happineſs in the next Life, it is alſo the beſt thing in the World to ſerve our turns in this? And that nothing can ſo much contribute to the bringing about our *Worldly Aims*; no ſuch ready way to attain to what our very *Fleſh* and *Bloud* moſt deſires, moſt delights in, as to be ſincerely *Pious*. What imaginable pretence can we then have for our contempt of *God* and *Virtue*? If this can be made to appear, ſure all our Objections will be fully anſwered; all our ſcruples ſatisfied; all our prejudices againſt *Religion* wholly removed; and every one that is not abandoned of his *Fortune* and his *Senſes*, as well as his *Reaſon*, muſt think himſelf concerned to become a Votary to it; ſince he can have no Temptation or Motive to *Vice* which will not more powerfully draw him to *Virtue*; and all the *ends* that the *one* can pretend to *ſerve*, will much more effectually be *ſerved* by the *other*; and he eſcapes an Eternity of Miſery, and gets everlaſting Life into the Bargain.

I think

I think it therefore worth the while to ſpend the time now allotted me in making good this Point, and diſcovering ſomething at leaſt of that univerſal *Profitableneſs of Godlineſs* to the purpoſes of *Human Life*, that St. *Paul* in my Text aſſures us of.

But becauſe the *Studies* of men are ſo infinitely various, and the *Ends* of *Life* to be ſerved ſo many, that it will be impoſſible to ſpeak *particularly* of them; it will be needful to pitch upon ſome *general* Heads, ſuch as, if they do not comprehend *all*, may yet take in *moſt* of thoſe things, to which the Labours and Endeavours of men are directed, and in the acquiſition of which they have compaſſed their Deſigns; and to ſhew the *ſerviceableneſs* of *Religion* above all other means for the attaining of them. And I think, I cannot pitch better than upon thoſe three noted *Idols* of the World, *Wealth* and *Honour* and *Pleaſure*; theſe being the *Goods* which have always been accounted to divide Mankind among them; and into the ſervice of ſome one or *all* of which All that ſet up for a happy life in this world do liſt themſelves, how different and diſagreeing ſoever they be from one another as to their particular Employments and ways of Living. I ſhall therefore make it

appear,

appear, that *Godlineſs* and *Religion* is a very great furtherance to the acquiſition of all theſe; and that no man can take a more ready way either to *improve* his *Fortune*, or to *purchaſe* a *Name and Reputation among men*, or to *live comfortably* and *pleaſantly* in this world, than heartily to ſerve *God*, and to live in the practice of every Virtue.

And in the *Firſt* place, I begin with the *Conduciveneſs of Religion and Godlineſs to improve our outward Fortunes*; the Advantages of it for the *getting* or *encreaſing* an *Eſtate*: For this is the thing to which our Thoughts are commonly firſt directed, as looking upon it as the Foundation of a happy Life in this world.

But here I deſire not to be miſtaken: I would not be thought to deal with you as one of our ordinary *Empiricks*, that promiſes many brave feats in his *Bill*, which are indeed beyond the power of his *Art*: I do not pretend that *Wealth* and *Opulency* is neceſſarily entailed upon *Religion*; ſo that whoever is *good* ſhall preſently be inabled to make Purchaſes, and to leave Lands and Livings to his Children. *Riches* are one of thoſe things that are not ſo perfectly in our power, that all men may hope for an equal ſhare

of them. The having more or leſs depends oftentimes not ſo much upon our ſelves, as upon that condition and quality in which we were born, the way and courſe of Life into which our Friends put us; and a hundred accidental circumſtances to which we our ſelves contribute nothing. But this I ſay; ſuppoſing the vertuous man in equal circumſtances with others; ſuppoſing him to ſtand upon the ſame level, and to enjoy the ſame fortuitous hits and external concurrences that they do, and he ſhall by many odds have the advantage of them for thriving and improving in the world in any condition of life whatſoever.

So that, ſo far as the getting of Riches depends upon Humane endeavours; ſo far as it is an *Art*, and falls under *Precepts* and *Directions*: no man alive can propoſe a better expedient in order thereto than a ſerious practiſe of Religion.

To make this good, let it be conſidered, that as to the *means* that do in a more direct and immediate manner influence upon the getting or improving an Eſtate (I ſpeak of *General means*, ſuch as are of uſe in all conditions of life; for to meddle with the Myſteries of any Particular Art or Trade, is not my purpoſe, as indeed it is beyond my skill:) as to ſuch means as theſe, I

ſay

ſay, none can preſcribe more effectual than theſe four.

1. *Prudence*, in adminiſtring our Affairs.
2. *Diligence*, in that Vocation wherein God hath placed us.
3. *Thrift* and good *Husbandry*.
4. Keeping a good Correſpondence with thoſe in whoſe power it is to hinder or promote our Affairs.

If now it do appear that *Godlineſs* doth highly improve a man in all theſe four reſpects; if it can be ſhewed that all theſe *Fruits* naturally grow and thrive better in a *Religious* Soil then any other, it will evidently follow; that ſuppoſing theſe above-named means do indeed contribute to the making of a Fortune, (and if they do not, no man knows what doth; and we ſtrangely abuſe our Friends and our Children, when upon that account we recommend them to them) it follows, I ſay, that a life of Godlineſs is a mighty advantage to a man for the purpoſes I am ſpeaking of.

And firſt of all, it will be eaſie to ſhew that *Godlineſs* doth above all things tend to *make a man wiſe and prudent, skilful and dexterous in the management of his Affairs of what nature ſoever*:

for it doth very much clear and improve a mans underſtanding, not only by a certain natural efficacy it hath (as I ſhall ſhew hereafter) to purifie the *Blood* and *Spirits*, upon which the perfection of our Intellectual Operations doth exceedingly much depend; but alſo by diſpelling thoſe *adventitious clouds* that ariſe in the diſcerning faculty from the noiſome *Fumes* of Luſt and Paſſion.

All Vice in the very nature of it, depraves and diſtorts a mans judgment, fills our minds with prejudices, and falſe Apprehenſions of things; and, no man that is under the dominion of it, can poſſibly have ſuch a free uſe of his Reaſon as otherwiſe he might; for he will commonly ſee things, not as they are in themſelves, but in thoſe diſguiſes and falſe colours which his Paſſion puts upon them: Upon which account he cannot avoid but he will be often impoſed upon, and commit a thouſand errors in the management of his Affairs, which the vertuous man, whoſe Reaſon is pure and untinctur'd, is ſecured from. It cannot be imagined that either he ſhould foreſee events ſo clearly, or ſpy opportunities ſo ſagaciouſly, or weigh things ſo impartially, or deliberate ſo calmly, or tranſact ſo cautiouſly, as the man that is free from

thoſe

thoſe manifold prepoſſeſſions which his mind is fraught with.

We ſee this every day verified in men of all Ranks and Conditions, of all Callings and Employments. What a multitude of inconveniences, as to matter of dealing between man and man, doth an intemperate Appetite betray men to? How ſilly and fooliſh is the moſt ſhrewd man, when Wine hath gotten into his head? There is none ſo ſimple in his company, but ſuppoſing him to be ſober, and to have deſigns upon him, he ſhall be able to over-reach him. What a world of Advantages doth the Angry man give to him he deals with, by the haſtineſs and impatience of his ſpirit? How often doth a man do that in the fury and expectancies of a Luſt, for which when his Ardors are over, he is ready to bite his nails for very vexation?

It is thus more or leſs with all kind of Vices, they craze a mans head, and caſt a miſt before his eyes, and make him often loſe himſelf in thoſe very ways wherein he pretends to be moſt skilful: So that it cannot be denied, that vertue is of a ſingular uſe in all matters wherein we have occaſion to make uſe of our Reaſon, and doth ſecure us from a multitude of indiſcretions, which without it we ſhould unavoidably commit.

But ſecondly, *Godlineſs is alſo an excellent means to ſecure a mans diligence in the diſcharge of his Calling and Employment*, which is alſo a matter of very great conſequence in order to our thriving in the world: for it is the *diligent hand that maketh rich*, and the *man that is diligent in his buſineſs, that ſhall ſtand before Kings*; as *Solomon* tells us.

Now the Obligations that *Religion* layeth upon us to be careful in this point, are far ſtronger then what can ariſe from any other reſpect or conſideration ſoever; for it obligeth us to mind our Buſineſs, not only for our *own* but for *Gods* ſake: it chargeth the matter upon our Conſciences, and repreſents it to us as a part of that ſervice we owe to our *Creator*; and upon the due performance of which, no leſs then the everlaſting welfare of our ſouls doth depend: for it aſſures us, that he that will call us to account for every *idle Word*, will much more do ſo for the *idle* expence of our *Time*, and the abuſe or not improvement of thoſe Talents that he hath entruſted us with. So that though we had no worldly inducement to make us diligent in our *Callings*, though we were ſure we ſhould ſuffer no prejudice in our Temporal Affairs by *Idleneſs*, and the neglect of our Buſineſs, (the fear of which yet is the only principle that puts world-

worldly men upon action) nevertheleſs we were infinitely concerned not to be ſlack or negligent in this matter, in regard it is a point that will be ſo ſeverely exacted of us in the other world.

I know but one Objection that can be made againſt this diſcourſe, and it is this, that what engagements ſoever *Religion* lays upon us to the careful ſpending of our time, yet its own *Exerciſes*, *Prayer* and *Reading*, and *Meditation*, take up ſo great a portion of it, which might be ſpent in the works of our ordinary Employment, that in effect it rather hinders our attendance on our Buſineſs than promotes it. But to this it is eaſily anſwered, that there is no man ſo engaged in the world, but may if he pleaſe, make both his *Buſineſs* and his *Devotions* conſiſt together without prejudicing of either.

They have very falſe Apprehenſions of Religion, that think it obliges us to be always upon our knees, or always poring upon ſome good Book: no, we do as truly ſerve God, and perform acts of Religion, when we labour honeſtly in our Vocation, as when we go to Church, or ſay our Prayers.

It is true indeed, we ought to have our hearts in Heaven as much as is poſſible, and to that end

we

we ought to pray continually; but what hinders but we may do this in the midſt of our Buſineſs? There is no employment doth ſo entirely engroſs a mans mind, but he may find leiſure if he pleaſe, many times a day, to entertain good thoughts, to quicken and reinforce his purpoſes, to caſt up a ſhort Prayer or a wiſh to God Almighty. And this I dare ſay for your encouragement, that ſuch a devout frame of heart, ſuch frequent and ſudden dartings of your ſouls to God, while you are at your Buſineſs, will be ſo far from hindering or diſtracting you in it, that they will make you go about it with much more vigour and alacrity.

But further, I would ask any man that makes the foreſaid Objection, ſuppoſing *Religion* ten times more expenſive of our time then really it is, yet whether *Vice* and *Sin* be not much more ſo, then it would be. What a multitude of idle avocations from, and interruptions in our Buſineſs doth that daily occaſion unto men? what a number of impertinent Diſcourſes, unprofitable Viſits, needleſs points of Gallantry, long diverſions by Drink, and Play, and Company; not to mention a great many other Debauches, doth it frequently engage men in? and yet theſe we count no hinderances to our Buſineſs; theſe

we

we complain not of; but to ſpend a quarter of that time in ſome devout Exerciſe, this is intolerable, it waſts too much of our time, our occaſions will not permit it. Such partial and unjuſt eſtimators of things are we. But I proceed.

In the third place then, as for *Frugality* and *good Husbandry*, which is another neceſſary requiſite for the getting of *Wealth*. *Religion* is unqueſtionably the beſt miſtreſs of it in the world; for it retrencheth all the exorbitances and wantonneſſes of our Deſires, which are the things that pick the money out of our purſes, and teacheth us to live after the meaſures of *Nature*, which every body knows are little, and cheap. It perfectly cuts off all thoſe idle expences with which the Eſtates of other men ſtand almoſt continually charged. The *Modeſty* of it cloaths us at a ſmall rate; and its *Temperance* ſpreads for us, though a neat, yet a frugal Table. The attendance it requires on our Buſineſs will not allow us to embezel our money in Drinking or Gaming: nor will that *Purity* which is inſeparable from it ever let us know what the vaſt and ſinking expences of lewdneſs and uncleanneſs are. In a word, it is *Vice* only that is the chargeable thing; it is only *Shame* and *Repentance* that

men buy at ſuch coſtly rates. Godlineſs is ſaving, and full of good Husbandry; nor has it any known or unknown ways of ſpending, except it be thoſe of *Charity*, which indeed, in proper ſpeaking, are not ſo much expence, as *Uſury*; for money ſo laid out, doth always even in this life return to us with Advantage.

The fourth and laſt means I mentioned of *Thriving* in the world, was the *keeping a good Correſpondence with all thoſe in whoſe power it is to hinder or promote our Affairs.* This every body knows to be a prime point in *Policy*; and indeed it is of a large extent, and of continual uſe. No man can be ſuppoſed ſo independent on others, but that as he is ſome way beholden to them for all that he has, ſo he ſtands in need of their help and concurrence for all that he hopes for. Men do not make their fortunes of themſelves, nor grow rich by having Treaſures dropped in their Laps, but they do it by the benefit of Humane Society, by the mutual aſſiſtances and good offices that one man performs for another. So that whoever intends to thrive in the world, it above all things imports him ſo to carry himſelf towards all that he hath any commerce with, ſo far to ſecure their favour and good will

that

that they may be obliged not to deny him any of those assistances, which the exigency of his Affairs calls for at their hands. But now how this should be done any otherwise than by being truly *Just* and *Honest*, by abstaining from *Violence* and *Injury*, by being *True* to our *Trusts*, and *Faithful* in performing our *Contracts*; and in a word, by doing all those good *Offices* to others which we expect they should do unto us, which as our Saviour tells us is the sum of *Religion*, is a very hard thing to conceive.

The usefulness or rather the necessity of such a Behaviour as this, in order to the gaining the good *Opinion* of others, and so serving our own ends by them, is so universally acknowledged, that even those that make no real Conscience of these things, are yet nevertheless in all their dealings forced to pretend to them. *Open* and *Bare-fac'd Knavery* rarely serves a mans turn in this world, but it is under the mask of *Virtue* and *Honesty* that it usually performs those Feats it doth; which is no less than a Demonstration of the conduciveness of those things to promote our Temporal Interests: for if the meer *Pretence* to them be a great advantage to us for this purpose, it cannot be imagined but that the *Reality* of them will be a greater. Certainly

the *Power* of *Godlineſs* will be able to do more than the *Form* alone, and that if it was upon no other account than this, that no man that is but a meer *Pretender* to *Honeſty* can long hope to keep his credit among men. It is impoſſible to *act* a *Part* for any long time; let him carry it never ſo cunningly, his *Vizor* will ſome time or other be thrown off, and he will appear in his true colours; and to what a world of miſchiefs and inconveniences he will then be expoſed, every one that knows how hated, how deteſted, how abandon'd by every one, a *Knave* and a *Villain* is, may eaſily determine. I hope I need ſay no more to convince you that *Religion* is the beſt *Policy*, and that the more hearty and conſciencious any man is in the practice of it, the more likely he is to *Thrive* and *Improve* in the world.

So that I may now proceed to the *ſecond* general point to be ſpoken to, which is the *Profitableneſs of Religion for the attaining a good Name and Reputation.* How very much it conduceth to this purpoſe will appear from theſe two conſiderations.

First, it lays the *ſureſt Grounds* and *Foundations* for a *good Name* and *Reputation.*

Second-

Secondly, Men are generally ſo juſt to it, that it rarely miſſes of a good Name and Reputation. The firſt is an argument from *Reaſon*, the ſecond from *Experience*.

Firſt of all *Godlineſs* layeth the *trueſt Foundations* for a *fair Reputation* in the world. There are but two things that can give a man a title to the good *Opinion* and *Reſpects* of men; the inward *Worth* and *Dignity* of his *Perſon*, and his *Uſefulneſs* and *Serviceableneſs* to others. The firſt of theſe challengeth mens *Eſteem*, the other their *Love*. Now both theſe Qualities Religion and Virtue do eminently poſſeſs us of.

For firſt, the *Religious* man is certainly the moſt *Worthy* and *Excellent* Perſon; for he of all others lives moſt up to the great *End* for which he was deſigned, which is the natural meaſure of the *Goodneſs* and *Worth* of Things.

What ever external Advantages a man may have, yet if he be not endowed with virtuous Qualities, he is far from having any True Worth or Excellence, and conſequently cannot be a fit object of our *Praiſe* and *Eſteem*; becauſe he wants that which ſhould make him *Perfect* and *Good* in his *Kind*. For it is not a comely Perſonage, or a long Race of Famous Anceſtors, or a large Revenue, or a multitude

of Servants, or many ſwelling Titles, or any other thing without a man that ſpeaks him a *Compleat Man*, or makes him to *be* what he ſhould be; but the right uſe of his Reaſon, the employing his Liberty and Choice to the beſt purpoſes, the Exerciſing his Powers and Faculties about the *fitteſt Objects*, and in the moſt *due meaſures*. Theſe are the Things that make him *Excellent*. Now none can be ſaid to do this but only he that is Virtuous.

Secondly, Religion alſo is that which makes a man moſt *Uſeful* and *Profitable* to others; for it effectually ſecures his performance of all thoſe Duties whereby both the ſecurity and welfare of the *Publick*, and alſo the Good and Advantage of *particular* Perſons is moſt attained.

It makes men Lovers of their Country, Loyal to their Prince, Obedient to Laws; it is the ſureſt Bond and Preſervative of Society in the world; it obliges us to live peaceably, and to ſubmit our ſelves to our Rulers, not only for *wrath*, but alſo for *Conſcience* ſake: It renders us modeſt and governable in Proſperity, and reſolute and couragious to ſuffer bravely in a good cauſe in the worſt of times: It teacheth us to endeavour as much as in us lies to promote

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the good of every particular Member of the Community, to be inflexibly upright, to do hurt to none, but good offices to all, to be charitable to the Bodies and Souls of men, to do all manner of kindneſſes that lie within our power: it takes off the ſowrneſs and moroſeneſs of our Spirits, and makes us Affable and Courteous, Gentle and Obliging, and willing to embrace with open Arms and an hearty Love, all ſorts and conditions of men.

In every Relation wherein we can ſtand to one another, it influenceth upon us in order to the making us more uſeful; it makes *Parents* kind, and Indulgent, and careful of the Education of their *Children*, and Children Loving and Obedient to their *Parents*: it makes Servants diligent to *pleaſe their Maſters, and to do their work in ſingleneſs of heart, not with eye-ſervice as men-pleaſers, but as unto God*; and it makes Maſters gentle and forbearing, and careful to make proviſion for their Family, *as thoſe that know they have a Maſter in Heaven, that is no reſpecter of perſons.* In a word, there is no condition or capacity, in which Religion will not be ſignally an inſtrument of making us more ſerviceable to others, and of doing more good in the world. And if ſuch be the ſpirit and temper of it, how is it poſ-

poſſible but it muſt needs acquire a great deal of Reſpect and Love from all ſorts of men? If Obligingneſs and doing good in ones Generation do not endear a man to thoſe that know him, do not entitle him to their Love and Affections, what thing in the world is there that is likely to do it?

But ſecondly, *True and unaffected Goodneſs ſeldom miſſes of a good Reputation in the world.* How unjuſt to Virtue ſoever men are in other reſpects, yet in this they generally give it its due; where ever it appears it generally meets with Eſteem and Approbation; nay it has the good word of many that otherwiſe are not over-fond of Religion. Though they have not the grace to be *Good* themſelves, yet they rarely have the confidence not to commend *Goodneſs* in others.

Add to this, that no man ever raiſed to himſelf a *Good name* in the world, but it was upon the ſcore of his *Virtues*, either *Real* or *Pretended*. Vice hath ſometimes got *Riches*, and advanced it ſelf into *Preferments*, but it never was accounted *Honourable* in any Nation.

It muſt be acknowledged indeed that it may and doth ſometimes happen, that *Vicious* men may be had in *Eſteem*; but then it is to be conſidered,

ſidered, that it is not for their *Vices* that they are eſteemed, but for ſome *good Quality* or other they are eminent in. And there is no doubt, if thoſe men were without thoſe *Vices*, their *Reputation* would be ſo far from being thereby *diminiſhed*, that it would become much more *Conſiderable*.

It muſt alſo be acknowledged on the other hand, that even *Virtuous* and *Good* men may ſometimes fail of that *Eſteem* and *Reſpect* that their Virtue ſeems to merit, nay, in that degree as to be ſlighted and deſpiſed, and to have many *Odious Terms* and *Nick-names* put upon them: But when we conſider the caſes in which this happens, it will appear to be of no force at all for the diſproving what has been now delivered. For *firſt*, it ought to be conſidered what kind of *Perſons* thoſe are that treat *Virtue* and *Virtuous* men thus *Contemptuouſly*, we ſhall always find them to be the *Worſt* and the *Vileſt* of mankind; ſuch who have debauched the natural principles of their minds, have loſt all the notions and diſtinctions of *Good* and *Evil*, are fallen below the *Dignity* of *Humane Nature*, and have nothing to bear up themſelves with, but *Boldneſs* and *Confidence*, *Drollery* and *Scurrility*, and turning into *Ridicule* every thing that is

grave and serious: But it is with these as it is with the *Monsters* and *Extravagances* of *Nature*, they are but very *Few*. Few in comparison of the rest of mankind, who have wiser and truer sentiments of things. But if they were more numerous, no man of understanding would value what such men said of him. It looks like a Crime to be commended by *such* Persons, and may justly occasion a man to reflect upon his own actions, and to cry out to himself as *He* did of old, What have I done that these men speak well of me?

But secondly, it cannot be denied but that some persons who are otherwise *Virtuous* and *Religious*, may be guilty of such Indiscretions as thereby to give others occasion to *slight* and *despise* them. But then it is to be considered, that this is not to be charged upon *Virtue* and *Religion*, but is the *Particular Fault* of the *Persons*. Every one that is *Religious* is not *Prudent*; the meanness of a mans *Understanding*, or his Rash and Intemperate *Zeal*, or the moroseness of his *Temper*, or his too great *Scrupulosity* about little things, may sometimes make his Behaviour *Uncouth* and *Fantastick*, and betray him to do many actions which he may think his *Religion* obliges him to, that other People will be apt

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to fancy *Silly* and *Ridiculous*. But this doth not at all reflect upon *Religion*; nor doth it follow, that becauſe the *Imprudence* of this or the other Particular man, expoſes him to the *Mirth* and the *Pleaſantneſs* of others, that therefore all *Religious Perſons* muſt fall under the ſame *Fate*. Moſt certainly *Religion*, wherever it is governed by *Knowledge* and *ſound Principles*, wherever it is managed with *Prudence* and *Diſcretion*, is a thing ſo *Noble*, ſo *Amiable*, that it attracts *Love*, and commands *Reſpect* from all that are acquainted with it, unleſs they be ſuch profligately wicked Perſons as I juſt now ſpoke of.

There is one *Objection* made from the *Scripture* againſt this and the former *Point* I have been ſpeaking to, which I deſire to remove, before I proceed to the *third* General Head of my Diſcourſe. It is this: That the Scripture is ſo far from repreſenting *Godlineſs* as a means to *Improve our Fortunes*, or *attain a Reputation in the world*, that it ſeems directly to affirm the contrary; for it aſſures us, that *All thoſe that will live godly in Chriſt muſt ſuffer Perſecution. That the Diſciples of Chriſt ſhall be Hated of All men for His Names ſake.* That *the World ſhall revile and perſecute them, and ſpeak all manner of Evil of them*; and that *through*

*many Tribulations we muſt enter into the Kingdom of God.*

But to this it is eaſily anſwered, that theſe and other ſuch like Paſſages of *Scripture* do not ſpeak the *General* and *Common* Fate that attends Godlineſs in all *times* and *places* of the world, according to the *Ordinary* courſe of Gods Providence; but only refer to that *particular Time*, when *Chriſtianity* was to be planted in the world; then, indeed, *Perſecution* and *Diſgrace*, loſs of *Goods*, and even of *Life* it ſelf, was to be the common portion of thoſe that profeſſed it: nor could it otherwiſe be expected; for, when a new *Religion* is to be ſet up, and ſuch a Religion as is perfectly *deſtructive* of all thoſe others that have been by long *cuſtom* received, and are by *Laws* eſtabliſhed in the world, It cannot be imagined but that it will meet with a great deal of Contradiction and Oppoſition from all ſorts of perſons. But this was a peculiar and extraordinary caſe, and could but laſt for a certain time; now that Chriſtianity hath obtained in the world, and is adopted into the Laws of Kingdoms, as God be thanked it is among us at this day: ſo far need we be from fearing that the practice of it will draw upon us any *Perſecution*, or ſuch other Inconveniences as are mentioned

tioned in the fore-cited places, that there is no doubt but that we may Rationally expect from it all thoſe *External* Benefits and Advantages, which as we have ſeen it is in its own nature apt to produce, and which God hath indeed made over to it by *Promiſe*, in ſeveral Paſſages of the Scripture, eſpecially of the Old Teſtament.

For that I may mention this by the By, I do not conceive that thoſe Promiſes of *Long Life*, *Good Days*, and all manner of worldly *Proſperity*, with which the Practice of *Godlineſs* is ſo frequently enforced in the *Old Teſtament*, were ſo appropriated to the *Jewiſh* Religion, as to be antiquated or diſannulled by the Introduction of the *Chriſtian*; but rather that they are ſtill in force to all the Purpoſes they were then: For that the coming of *Chriſt* into the world did add many great *Bleſſings* and *Priviledges* to the People of God, which before they had not, we are certain of: but that it *took away* from them any that before they had, this we no where read, nor indeed is it probable.

But I haſten to the third and laſt General Head I am to ſpeak to, which is the *Excellent Miniſteries of Religion above all other things, to the Pleaſures of Humane Life*: which point, if it be

clearly made out, I do not ſee what can be further wanting to recommend it unto us, as the moſt effectual Inſtrument for the ſerving all our turns in this World. Now that Godlineſs doth indeed make the moſt excellent Proviſions for all ſorts of Pleaſures, will appear by theſe four Conſiderations.

Firſt, That it eminently miniſtreth to *Health*, which is a neceſſary Foundation for all *Pleaſures*.

Secondly, It doth much increaſe the *Reliſh* and *Sweetneſs* of all our other *Pleaſures*.

Thirdly, It ſecures us from all thoſe *Inquietudes* and *Diſturbances* which are apt to *embitter* our *Pleaſures*, and make our Lives uncomfortable.

Fourthly, It adds to *Humane Life* a world of *Pleaſures* of its own, which thoſe that are not poſſeſſed of it, are utterly unacquainted with.

Firſt of all, *Godlineſs doth very much conduce to Health*, which is ſo neceſſary to our enjoyment of any *ſenſible Good*, that without it, neither *Riches*, nor *Honours*, nor any thing that we eſteem moſt gratifying to our Senſes will ſignifie any thing at all to us. Now that a *Sound* and *Healthful Conſtitution* doth exceedingly much depend

depend upon a diſcreet government and moderation of our Appetites and Paſſions, upon a ſober and temperate uſe of all Gods Creatures, which is an *eſſential* Part of *True Religion*, is a thing ſo evident, that I need make no words about it. What are moſt of our *Diſeaſes* and *Infirmities* that make us miſerable and unpitied while we live, and cut us off in the midſt of our days, and tranſmit Weakneſs and Rottenneſs to our *Poſterity*, but the effects of our *Exceſſes* and *Debauches*, our *Wantonneſs* and *Luxury*? Certainly, if we would obſerve thoſe Meaſures in our *Diet* and in our *Labours*, in our *Paſſions* and in our *Pleaſures* which Religion has bound us up to, we might to ſuch a degree *Preſerve* our *Bodies*, as to render the greateſt Part of *Phyſick* perfectly ſuperfluous. But theſe things are too well known to need to be inſiſted on. I therefore paſs on to the next thing.

Secondly, *A Life of Religion doth very much increaſe the reliſh and ſweetneſs* of all our *ſenſible Enjoyments*. So far is it from abridging us of any of our earthly delights (as its enemies ſlanderouſly repreſent it) that it abundantly heightens them. It doth not only indulge to us the free uſe of all thoſe good Creatures of God which he hath made for the Support and Comfort

fort of Mankind, while they are in these Earthly Bodies; but also makes them more exquisitely gratifying and delightful than without it they could possibly be. And this it doth in part by the means of that never sufficiently commended Temperance and Moderation I before spoke of: for hereby it comes to pass that our *Senses*, which are the Instruments of our Pleasures are always preserved in that due Purity and Quickness, that is absolutely necessary for the right performing of their *Offices*, and the rendering our Perceptions of any thing grateful and agreeable. Whereas the *Sensual* and *Voluptuous* man defeats his own designs, and whilst he thinks to enjoy a *greater* share of *Pleasures* than other men, really enjoys a *less*. For his Dissoluteness and giving up the reins to his Appetites only serves to dull and stupifie them. Nor doth he reap any other Benefit from his continual hankering after *Bodily Pleasures*, but that his *Sensations* of them are hereby made altogether *Flat* and *Unaffecting*. Neither is his *Meat* half so savoury, nor his *Recreations* so diverting, nor his *Sleep* so sweet, nor the *Company* he keeps so agreeable as *Theirs* are, that by following the measures of

of *Nature* and *Reaſon*, come to them with *truer* and more *unforc'd* Appetites.

But beſides this, there is a certain *Lightſomneſs* and *Chearfulneſs* of mind, which is in a manner *peculiar* to the truly *Religious* Soul, that above all things *ſets off* our *Pleaſures*, and makes all the *Actions* and *Perceptions* of Humane Life *Sweet* and *Delightful*. True *Piety* is the beſt Cure of *Melancholy* in the world; nothing comparable to it for diſpelling that *Lumpiſhneſs* and *Inactivity*, that renders the Soul of a Man uncapable of enjoying either it ſelf or any thing elſe. It fills the Soul with perpetual *Light* and *Vigour*, infuſeth a ſtrange kind of *Alacrity* and *Gayety* of Humour into us. And this it doth not only by removing thoſe things that *Hinder* our Mirth, and make us languiſh in the midſt of our Feſtivities, (ſuch as are the Pangs of an Evil *Conſcience*, and the ſtorms of unmortified *Paſſions*, of which I ſhall ſpeak in the following particular) but even by a more *Phyſical Efficiency*. It hath really a mighty Power to *Correct* and *Exalt* a mans *Natural* Temper. Thoſe Ardent Breathings and Workings wherewith the Pious Soul is continually carried out after God and Virtue, are to the Body like ſo much *Freſh Air* and *Wholſom Exerciſe*; they *Fan* the

 *Blood*,

*Blood*, and keep it from *Settling*; they *Clarifie* the *Spirits*, and purge them from those grosser *Feculencies* which would otherwise *Cloud* our *Understandings*, and make us *dull* and *listless*. And to these effects of *Religion* doth *Solomon* seem to Allude, when he tells us, that *Wisdom maketh a mans face to shine*, Eccles. 8. 1.

Where he seems to intimate, that that *Purity* and *Exaltation* into which the *Blood* and *Spirits* of a man are wrought by the Exercise of Virtue and Devotion doth diffuse it self even to his *Outward Visage*, making the *Countenance* clear, and serene, and filling the *Eyes* with an unusual kind of Splendor and Vivacity. But whether this be a true Comment on his words or no, certain it is, that *Piety* disposeth a man to *Mirth* and *Lightness* of Heart above all things in the world: and how admirable a *Relish* this doth give to all our other *Pleasures* and *Enjoyments* there is none but can easily discern.

Thirdly, Let it be further considered, that *Godliness* is a most Effectual *Antidote* against all those *Inquietudes*, and *Evil Accidents*, that do either wholly *destroy*, or very much *embitter* the *Pleasures* of this Life.

For whilst it teacheth us to place all our Happiness

pineſs in *God Almighty* and *our ſelves* only, whilſt we have learn'd to bring all our Affections and Paſſions, our Deſires and Averſions, our Hopes and Fears, under the command of our *Reaſon*; and endeavour not ſo much to ſuit *Things* to our *Wills*, as our *Wills* to *Things*; being Indifferent to all Events that can happen, ſave only that we always judge thoſe Beſt which God in his Providence ſends us. Being I ſay, thus diſpoſed (as certainly Religion if it be ſuffered to have its perfect work upon us will thus diſpoſe us,) what is it that ſhall be able to diſturb or interrupt our *Pleaſures*, or create any Trouble or Vexation to us? Our *Preſent Enjoyments* will not be *Embittered* with the fear of loſing them, or *leſſened* by our Impatient Longing after *Greater*. Our *Brains* will not be upon the *Rack* for Compaſſing things that are perhaps Impoſſible, nor our *Bodies* under the Scourge of *Rage* and *Anger* for every Diſappointment. We ſhall not look pale with *Envy* that our *Neighbours* have that which *we* have not, nor Pine away with *Grief* if we ſhould happen to loſe that which we have.

But the *Vicious* man is expoſed to all theſe Miſeries, and a thouſand more; He carries that within him, which will perpetually fret

and torment him, for he is a *Slave* to his *Paſſions*; and the leaſt of them, when it is let looſe upon him, is the *Worſt* of *Tyrants*. He is like the *Troubled Sea*, reſtleſs and ever working, rifled and diſcompoſed with every thing. He is not capable of being rendred ſo much as *Tolerably Happy* by the beſt Condition this world affords: For having ſuch a world of Impetuous *Deſires* and *Appetites* which muſt all be *ſatisfied*, or elſe he is miſerable; and there being ſuch an infinite number of *Circumſtances* that muſt concur to the giving them that *Satisfaction*: And all theſe depending upon *Things without him*, which are perfectly out of his Power, it cannot be avoided but he will continually find matter to diſquiet him, and render his condition troubleſome and uneaſie: a thouſand unforeſeen Accidents will ever be croſſing his Deſigns. Nor will there be wanting ſome little Thing or other, almoſt hourly to put him out of Humour.

And if this be the Caſe of the *Vicious* man, in the *Beſt Circumſtances* of this world (where the Cauſes of Vexation are in a manner undiſcernable) in what a miſerable Condition muſt he needs be, under thoſe more *Real Afflictions* unto which Humane Life is obnoxious,

ous, what is there that ſhall be able to ſupport his Spirit under the Tedioufneſs of a *Lingering Sickneſs*, or the Anguiſh of an *Acute Pain*? What is become of all his Mirth and Jollity, if there ſhould happen a *Turn* in His *Fortune*, if he ſhould fall into *Diſgrace*, or his Friends forſake him, or the Means of maintaining his Pleaſures fail him, and the miſerable man become *Poor* and *Deſpiſed*? Not to mention a great many more Evils, which will make him uncapable of any Conſolation, eat into the Heart of his beſt Enjoyments, and become *Gall* and *Wormwood* to his choiceſt Delicacies.

And has he not now, think you, made *admirable* Proviſions for his *Pleaſures*? Has he not done himſelf a wonderful Piece of Service, by freeing himſelf from the *Drudgery*, as he calls it, of Virtue and Religion? Alas, *Poor Man*! this is the only Thing that would now have ſecured him from all theſe ſad *Accidents* and *Diſpleaſures*. The *Good Man* ſits above the *Reach* of *Fortune*, and in ſpite of all the Viciſſitudes and Uncertainties of this *Lower World*, with which other men are continually Alarm'd, enjoys a Conſtant and Undiſturbed Peace. Thoſe *Evils* that may be *Avoided*, (and really a great many which afflict mortal men, are ſuch) he by his

Prudent Conduct and Government of himself wholly prevents. And those that are *Unavoidable*, he takes by such a *Handle*, that they have no power to do him any *Harm*: For he is indeed possessed of that which the *Alchymists* in vain seek for: Such a *Sovereign Art* he has, that he can turn the *Baseſt Metals* into *Gold*, make such an use of the *worſt Accidents* that can befal him, that they shall not be accounted his *Miseries*, but his *Enjoyments*. So that however the varieties of his Condition may occasion a *change* in his *Pleasures*, yet can they never cause any *Loss* or *Destruction* of them.

And this security he enjoys, not as some of the *Stoicks* of old pretended to do, by an Imaginary *Insensibility*, or by changing the *names* of *Things*, calling that *no Evil* which Really is one: but by an absolute Resignation of himself to the will of *God*, and an Hearty acquiescing in his wise Providence. He is certain there is a God that governs the world, and that nothing happens to him, but by his Order and Appointment. And he is certain also that this God hath a Real kindness for him, and would not dispense any Event unto him, but what is really for his Good and Advantage. And these thoughts so support his Spirit, that he not only bears patiently, but

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thanks God for what ever happens to him. And inſtead of Fretting and Complaining that things ſucceed otherwiſe then he expected, he Reſolves with himſelf that that Condition, whatever it be, in which he actually is, is indeed beſt for him; and that which he himſelf, were he to be the Carver of his Fortunes, ſuppoſing him but truly to underſtand his own Concernments, would chuſe for himſelf above all others.

But further, beſides this ſecurity from *Outward Diſturbances* which our virtue obtains for us, there is another *Evil* which it alſo delivers us from, with which the wicked man is almoſt perpetually haunted, and which ſeldom ſuffers him to enjoy any ſincere, unmingled Pleaſure. That which I mean is the *Pangs* of an *Evil Conſcience*, the Fears, the Reſtleſneſs, the Confuſion, the Amazements that ariſe in his ſoul from the ſenſe of his Crimes, and the juſt Apprehenſions of the ſhame and vengeance that doth await them, poſſibly in this Life, but moſt certainly in the Life to come.

How Happy, how Proſperous ſoever the Sinner be as to his other Affairs, yet theſe Furies he ſhall be ſure to be plagued with: no pompouſneſs of Condition, no coſtly Entertainments, no noiſe of Company will be able to drive them away.

away. Every man that is wicked cannot but know that he is ſo, and that very Knowledge is a Principle of perpetual Anguiſh and Diſquietude. Be his Crimes never ſo ſecret, yet he cannot be confident they will always continue ſo: and the very Apprehenſion of this makes him feel all the Shame and Amazement of a preſent Diſcovery. But put the caſe he hath had the good luck to ſin ſo cloſely, or in ſuch a nature that he need fear nothing from *Men*; yet he knows there is an Offended *God* to whom he hath a ſad and a fearful Reckoning to make: a God too *Juſt* to be Bribed, too *Mighty* to be Over-awed, too *Wiſe* to be Impoſed upon. And is not *the man*, think you, under ſuch Reflections as theſe likely to live a very *Comfortable life?* Ah, none knows the *Bitterneſs* of them but himſelf that feels them. To the Judgment of others he perhaps appears a very happy man, he hath the world at his beck, all things ſeem to conſpire to make him a great *Example* of *Proſperity*, we admire, we applaud his Condition. But ah, we know not how ſad a heart he often carries under this fair Out-ſide: we know not with what ſudden Damps his ſpirit is often ſtruck, even in the heighth of his Revellings. We know not how unquiet, how bro-

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ken his ſleeps are, how oft he ſtarts and looks pale; when the Wife that lies by his ſide underſtands not what the matter is with him.

He doth indeed endeavour all he can to ſtifle his Cares, and to ſtop the mouth of his Conſcience. He thinks to *divert* it with *Buſineſs*, or to *flatter* it with little *Sophiſtries*, or to *drown* it with *rivers* of *Wine*, or to *calm* it with *ſoft* and *gentle Airs*. And he is indeed ſometimes ſo ſucceſsful in theſe Arts as for a while to lay it aſleep. But alas this is no laſting peace, the leaſt thing awakens it, even the ſound of a *Paſſing-Bell*, or a *clap* of *Thunder*; nay, a Frightful *Dream*, or a *Melancholy Story* hath the power to do it, and then the poor man returns to his Torment.

And now judge you, whether the Honeſt and Virtuous Man that is free from all theſe Agonies, that is at Peace with *God*, and at Peace with his own *Conſcience*, that apprehends nothing terrible from the *one*, nor feels any thing troubleſome from the *other*, but is ſafe from *Himſelf* and from all the *world* in his own Innocence: Judge, I ſay, whether ſuch a one hath not laid to himſelf *better* and *ſurer Foundations* for *Pleaſures* and a happy Life, than the man that by indulging his *Luſts* and *Vices*, only breeds up a *Snake* in his *Boſom*, which will not ceaſe to *Sting* and *Gall*

him beyond what a Tongue is able to expreſs, or a *witty Cruelty* to Invent.

Fourthly and laſtly, beſides the benefits of *Religion* for *removing* the *hinderances* of our *Pleaſures*; it alſo adds to Humane Life a world of *pleaſures* of its own, which vicious men are utterly unacquainted with.

And theſe are of ſo excellent a kind, ſo delicious, ſo enraviſhing, that the higheſt gratifications of ſenſe are not comparable to them. Never till we come to be heartily Religious do we underſtand what *true Pleaſure* is. That which ariſeth from the grateful motions that are made in our outward ſenſes, is but a *faint ſhadow*, a *meer dream* of it. Then do we begin to enjoy *true Pleaſures* indeed when our Higheſt and Divineſt Faculties, which were wholly laid aſleep while we lived the life of ſenſe, begin to be awakened, and to exerciſe themſelves upon their proper objects, when we become acquainted with God, and the Infinite Abyſs of *Good* that is in him, when our hearts are made ſenſible of the great Love and good will he bears us; and in that ſenſe are powerfully carried out in Joy, and Love, and deſire after him: when we feel the *Divine Nature* daily more and more diſplayed

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in our ſouls, ſhewing forth it ſelf in the bleſſed Fruits of Charity and Peaceableneſs, and Meekneſs, and Humility, and Purity, and Devotion, and all the other Graces of the Holy Spirit. It is not poſſible but that ſuch a Life as this muſt needs be a Fountain of inexpreſſible joy to him that leads it, and fill the Soul with tranſcendently greater content than any thing upon earth can poſſibly do: for this is the Life of God, this is the Life of the Bleſſed Angels above, this is the Life that is moſt of all agreeable to our own natures. While we live thus, things are with us as they ſhould be; our Souls are in their natural Poſture, in that ſtate they were framed and deſigned to live in: whereas the Life of Sin is a ſtate of Diſorder and Confuſion; a perpetual violence and force upon our Natures. While we live thus, we enjoy the *Pleaſures* of *men*, whereas before when we were governed by ſenſe, we could pretend to no other ſatisfactions but what the *Brutes* have as well as we. In this ſtate of life we gratifie our *Higheſt* and *Nobleſt* Powers, the intellectual Appetites of our Souls; which as they are infinitely capacious, ſo have they an infinite good to fill them: whereas in the ſenſual Life, the *meaneſt*, the *dulleſt*, and the *moſt contracted* Faculties of our Souls were only provided for.

But what need I carry you out into these *Speculations*, when your own *sense* and *experience* will ascertain you in this matter above a thousand Arguments. Do but seriously set your selves to *serve God*, if you have yet never done it, do but once try what it is to live up to the Precepts of *Reason*, and *Virtue*, and *Religion*; and I dare confidently pronounce that you will in *one month* find more *Joy*, more *Peace*, more *Content*, to arise in your spirits, from the sense that you have resisted the Temptations of Evil, and done what was your duty to do, than in *many years* spent in Vanity and a Licentious course of living. I doubt not in the least, but that after you have once *seen* and *tasted how gracious the Lord is*, how good all his ways are; but you will proclaim to all the world, that *One day spent in his Courts is better than a thousand:* Nay, you will be ready to cry out with the *Roman Orator* (if it be lawful to quote the Testimony of a *Heathen*, after that of the *Divine* Psalmist) that *One day lived according to the Precepts of Virtue is to be preferred before an Immortality of Sin.*

You will then alter all your sentiments of things, and wonder that you should have been so strangely abused by false representations of Virtue and Vice. You will then see that Religion is

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quite another thing than it appeared to you before you became acquainted with it. Inſtead of that grim, ſowr, unpleaſant Countenance in which you heretofore painted her to your ſelf, you will then diſcover nothing in her but what is infinitely Lovely and Charming. Thoſe very Actions of Religion which you now cannot think upon with Patience, they ſeem ſo harſh and unpleaſant, you will then find to be accompanied with a wonderful Delight. You will not then complain of the *narrowneſs* of the *Bounds*, or the *ſcantineſs* of the *Meaſures* that it hath confined your deſires to; for you will then find that you have hereby gained an entrance into a far greater and more perfect *Liberty*. How ungentilely, how much againſt the *grane* of *Nature* ſoever it now looks to *forgive* an *Injury*, or an *Affront*; you will then find it to be as far more eaſie, ſo far more ſweet than to revenge one. You will no longer think works of *Charity* burdenſome or expenſive; or that to do good Offices to every one is an employment too mean for you; for you will then experience that there is no ſenſuality like that of *doing good*, and that it is a greater pleaſure to *do* a kindneſs than to *receive* one. How will you chide your ſelf for having been ſo averſe to *Prayer* and other *devout*

*Exercises*, accounting them as tiresome unsavoury things; when you begin to feel the delicious Relishes they leave upon your spirit? You will then confess that no Conversation is half so agreeable as that which we enjoy with God Almighty in Prayer; no Cordial so reviving as heartily to pour out our souls unto him. And then to be affected with his *Mercies*, to praise and give thanks to him for his Benefits, what is it but a very *Heaven* upon *Earth*, an anticipation of the Joys of Eternity? Nay, you will not be without your pleasures even in the very *entrance* of *Religion*, then when you exercise acts of *Repentance*, when you *mourn* and *afflict* your self for your sins, which seems the frightfullest thing in all Religion. For such is the nature of that holy sorrow, that you would not for all the world be without it, and you will find far greater Contentment and satisfaction in *grieving* for your *Offences*, then ever you did receive from the *Committing* them.

But, O the ineffable Pleasures that do continually spring up in the heart of a good man, from the sense of Gods Love, and the hope of his Favour, and the fair prospect he hath of the Joy and Happiness of the other world! How pleasing, how transporting will the thought of these things be to you! To think that you are one of those

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happy ſouls that are of an Enemy become the Friend of God, that your ways pleaſe him, and that you are not only *Pardoned*, but *Accepted* and *Beloved* by him: to think that you a *poor Creature* who were of your ſelf nothing, and by your ſins had made your ſelf far worſe than nothing, are yet by the goodneſs of your Saviour become ſo *conſiderable* a *Being*, as to be able to give delight to the King of the world, and to *cauſe joy in Heaven among the Bleſſed Angels by your Repentance*: to think that God charges his Providence with you, takes care of all your Concerns, hears all your Prayers, provides all things needful for you, and that he will in his good time take you up unto himſelf, to live everlaſtingly in his Preſence, to be partaker of his Glories, to be raviſhed with his Love, to be acquainted with his Counſels, to know and be known by *Angels*, *Archangels*, and *Seraphims*; to enjoy a Converſation with *Prophets*, *Apoſtles*, and *Martyrs*, and all the *Raiſed* and *Glorified Spirits* of Brave *Men*; and with all theſe to ſpend a happy and a rapturous Eternity, in Adoring, in Loving, in Praiſing God for the Infiniteneſs of his Wiſdom, and the Miracles of his Mercy and Goodneſs to all his Creatures. Can there be any *Pleaſure* like this? Can any thing in the world put you into ſuch an *Ecſtaſie* of *Joy* as the very

very *thought* of these things? With what a mighty scorn and contempt will you in the sense of them look down upon all the little Gauderies and sickly Satisfactions that the men of this world keep such a stir about! How empty & evanid, how flat and unsavoury will the best Pleasures on Earth appear to you in comparison of these Divine Contentments? You will perpetually rejoyce, you will sing Praises to your Saviour, you will bless the day that ever you became acquainted with him; you will confess him to be the only master of Pleasure in the world, and that you never knew what it was to be an *Epicure* indeed, till you became a *Christian*.

Thus have I gone through all these Heads which I at first proposed to insist on. What now remains but that I resume the *Apostles Exhortation* with which I begun this Discourse, that since as you have seen, *Godliness is so exceedingly profitable to all the purposes of this Life, as well as the other*: since, as you have seen, *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour*; and *all her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*: you would all be perswaded seriously to *Apply your selves* to the *exercise* of it. Which that you may do, *God of his*, &c.

FINIS.